



## **Brazil's Soft-Power Strategy: The Political Aspirations of South–South Development Cooperation**

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*Published in:*  
Foreign Policy Analysis

*Link to article, DOI:*  
[10.1093/fpa/orw015](https://doi.org/10.1093/fpa/orw015)

*Publication date:*  
2017

*Document Version*  
Peer reviewed version

[Link back to DTU Orbit](#)

*Citation (APA):*  
Bry, S. (2017). Brazil's Soft-Power Strategy: The Political Aspirations of South–South Development Cooperation. *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 13(2). <https://doi.org/10.1093/fpa/orw015>

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# **BRAZIL'S SOFT POWER STRATEGY: THE POLITICAL ASPIRATIONS OF SOUTH–SOUTH DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Soft power<sup>1</sup> is an international relations concept based on the assumption that a country gains power by constructing or maintaining an 'attractive' image. This positive image influences a state's decision such that 'If a state can make its power seem legitimate in the eyes of others, it will encounter less resistance to its wishes' (Nye 1990, 169). This legitimacy is gained through attraction rather than coercion (Nye 2008, 2011). While soft power applies to all kinds of powers, it is particularly relevant for middle powers. Patience (2014) explains that 'where a state has relatively limited military and economic capacity but is nonetheless successful in having its imagining recognised and respected beyond its borders, it may accrue degrees of influence and authority among its neighbours that even reach into global forums' (2013, 3). To assert their power, middle powers use recognition and legitimacy. This represents the major difference between great and middle powers: the first traditionally use their coercive capabilities, while the second tend to favour the use of soft power (Gratius 2007). However, in its empirical application, academics have pointed to the misunderstandings that have arisen from varying conceptualisations of soft power, ranging from the resources used, the results obtained, and changes in a subject's perception or an agent's behaviour (Vuving 2009, Kearn 2011, Hayden 2012).

Because of its societal and economic circumstances and its aspirations on the international scene, Brazil has been referred to as a middle power<sup>2</sup> (Patience 2014) or more accurately an emerging middle power (van der Westhuizen 2012) or even a middle global power (Malamud 2011). Gratius

(2007) explains that 'Brazil's rejection of hard power is based on the conviction that it cannot operate alone, but it needs to create alliances with other countries to reach its objectives' (2007, 24). While Brazil's efforts to improve its reputation have not been that successful at the regional level, as evidenced by the rivalries in the region (Malamud 2001, Malamud and Rodriguez 2013), recently it has acquired an international reputation (Malamud 2011) through the use of alliances<sup>3</sup>. Various scholars looking at Brazilian foreign diplomacy generally agree that Brazil is using two platforms to foster its soft power, namely increasing its participation in the international scene and giving a voice to developing countries by reinforcing alliances and cooperation between Southern countries (Soares de Lima and Hirst 2006, de Almeida 2008, White 2010, Hirst 2012, Ayllon 2012a, Silva and Andriotti 2012). Indeed, during President Lula da Silva's administration, Brazil's international presence was characterised by its increased participation in multilateral institutions, the creation of new alliances, the construction of a united South America (Saraiva 2007) and its involvement in development cooperation and humanitarian missions (Vigenani and Cepaluni 2007, Ayllon 2010, Soares de Lima and Castelan 2012, Inoue and Costa Vaz 2012, Christensen 2013). Special attention was given to South–South Cooperation, which became a fundamental aspect of Brazil's foreign policy (MRE 2010b). To raise its profile internationally, Lula's government encouraged its diplomats and development actors to promote South–South Development Cooperation (SSDC) projects (Silva and Andriotti 2012, Burges 2014a). As the Brazilian Foreign Ministry (MRE) declared: 'The technical cooperation<sup>4</sup> developed by Brazil was expanded following the guidelines of the policy of strengthening South–South dialogue as an instrument of Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's government's foreign policy. This cooperation aims to strengthen bilateral relations between Brazil and the rest of the world, raising the country's profile on the

world stage'<sup>5</sup> (MRE 2010a, Chapter 7.1.1). The increase in SSDC projects was therefore a foreign policy strategy for Brazil to gain soft power, as they contributed to 'raising the country's profile'.

But how exactly did Brazil conceive its international interventions, specifically its SSDC, in order to obtain a positive image for itself? And how important is the search for 'soft power' to Brazilian development cooperation policy?

Apart from annual reports from a few multilateral institutions that provide an overview of Brazilian cooperation projects, there is little information about how Brazilian cooperation is used as an instrument of its foreign policy (Ayllon 2010). This is due to the fact that there is little literature about Brazilian SSDC (Milani 2012) in general, and also that very few studies have been carried out on its foreign policy, especially in the English-language academic literature (Dauvergne and Farias 2012). While there have been studies highlighting the relationship between Brazil's technical cooperation and its foreign policy (Abdenur 2007, Cabral and Weinstock 2010, Puente 2010, Giacalone 2013), few have informed their analysis with soft power or contributed to the theoretical development of emerging countries' motivations (such as Brazil's) in participating in SSDC (Burges 2014a).

To address this gap in the literature, this article uses policy reports, official documents, interviews and the academic literature, working on the assumption that they all reflect what the Brazilian government is seeking to promote in its foreign policy. In addition to its analysis of the SSDC projects' scope and location, the article analyses the concept of development cooperation as described by the persons interviewed for this article and in official documents, as well as critically assesses the official narrative on SSDC. Thus the goal of this article is not to assess the

effectiveness of Brazil's foreign policy but to reflect on the Brazilian government's understanding of it.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in January 2013 with officials and development actors<sup>6</sup> in Brazil in order to build upon the limited quantitative data available on Brazil's SSDC activities. Indeed, data on development cooperation is scarce. This scarcity (Puente 2010) has been explained by the opacity (Rowlands 2008), or irregularity and superficiality (Pimont Berndt 2009, SEGIB 2009, Betancourt and Schulz 2009), of the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC) when it comes to publishing information about its activities. The only two existing official reports<sup>7</sup> on Brazilian SSDC were published respectively in 2010 and 2013 by the Brazilian Institute for Applied Economic Research (IPEA), a federal public foundation linked to the Strategic Affairs Secretariat of the Presidency. Both showcase the volumes and destinations of Brazilian SSDC activities for the period 2005–2010 alone and represent the core of the quantitative data of this article. The analysis of the Brazilian contribution to cooperation therefore concentrates on the years 2005 to 2010. Additionally, while other authors have rightly highlighted the recent pluralisation of actors in the definition of Brazilian foreign policy and SSDC (Cason and Power 2009) – notably the growing role of the civil society (Leite et al. 2014) and of other Brazilian ministries and public institutions (Milani and Pinheiro 2013, Milhorange 2013, Anunciato and Marx 2014) - the MRE still enjoys a certain independence in its activities (Burgess 2014b, Pautasso and Adam 2014). In 2010, the MRE was still the ministry that spent the most on SSDC (through the ABC), accounting for 80% of the SSDC budget (IPEA 2013). For that reason, this article only reflects on the MRE's perspective (and also to some extent Lula's own views) through its study of the ABC's activities.

The aim of this article is therefore to discover the extent to which soft power informed the design of Brazilian SSDC, thus reversing its neglect in the academic literature at both the development

studies level and the level of the conceptual development of soft power. In contributing to the debate by presenting empirical evidence of a state's behaviour in relation to soft power, the article first examines to what extent the soft power strategy influenced the organisation of the ABC, before going on to study its influence on the substantive content of Brazil's SSDC.

### **Conceptual framework**

Before analysing the extent of the soft power strategy in Brazilian SSDC, this sub-section briefly discusses the conceptual framework used in this article. The argument is based on the soft power concept, which was first introduced in the 1990s by Joseph Nye. The assumption underlying this concept is that, if a state builds a positive image of itself, other states will be drawn to it. Nye refers to attraction, Gallarotti to endearment, both of which pertain to co-optation, in opposition to the coercive power relationship of the realist paradigm.

Various observers, such as Bially Mattern (2005) and Kearn (2011), have highlighted the lack of clarity in Nye's notion of soft power when it comes to distinguishing its different manifestations: it is considered a natural condition (the country or agent already has a stockpile of values and successes, which consequently generates attraction), a behaviour or behavioural outcome (the actions a country takes to improve its image) and an outcome (the power that is translated into legitimacy and credibility given by the subject). Because Nye introduces two levels of soft power by viewings a country's attraction as both a natural condition and a social construct, there has been little analytical development regarding the role of actors and the 'how' of soft power (Lukes 2005).

This article addresses this analytical limitation of Nye's concept by exploring the 'how' of soft power through one actor's behaviour, namely Brazil's conceptualisation of the soft power currencies of 'brilliance', 'beauty' and 'benignity' in pursuing SSDC. Indeed, because the difference

between soft and hard power relates not to the tangibility of the resources but to the context of their use (Gallarotti 2011), Vuving (2009) distinguishes between power resources (which can be used in both hard and soft forms) and power currencies (a property that generates power). For Vuving, soft power has three generic power currencies: beauty, benignity and brilliance. The 'beauty' currency represents the country's values and ideals, which ultimately generate credibility and legitimacy. 'Benignity' as a soft power currency is what one might call generosity and altruism towards other countries or groups. Finally 'brilliance' mirrors the success of a country, whether by virtue of its military might, its powerful economy or its blissful culture or peaceful society. All these currencies contribute to soft empowerment.

This article presents evidence indicating that the search for soft power informs the design of Brazil's development cooperation as an aspect of its foreign policy. While, as a middle power, Brazil's foreign policy has used other soft power resources<sup>8</sup> to acquire a positive image of itself, a particular emphasis was placed on its development cooperation under Lula's administration<sup>9</sup>. The article studies especially Brazilian technical cooperation because of the priority given to SSDC. The analysis is therefore of the extent of the search for soft power in Lula's government's framing and conceptualisation of its SSDC. It does not look at how Brazil is perceived by the beneficiaries of this cooperation. While studies have examined the results of this soft power strategy in terms of international representation<sup>10</sup> and support<sup>11</sup>, or in terms of the image that has been created,<sup>12</sup> very few studies have looked at how Brazil conceived its foreign policy with the objective of creating or maintaining soft power<sup>13</sup>. This relates to one aspect of the soft power concept that has so far received minimal attention, namely the role and importance of the agent's behaviour in its soft empowerment, in this case, Brazil's behaviour<sup>14</sup>. To study this behaviour, the article draws on

Vuving's idea of soft power currencies to characterise the strategy used by Brazil in the design and implementation of its development cooperation.

## **INFLUENCE OF BRAZIL'S FOREIGN MINISTRY ON ITS COOPERATION AGENCY**

### **The Lula Government's Solidarity Discourse on SSDC**

One of the most significant illustrations of Brazil's development cooperation as an instrument of its foreign policy is that it was one of the first non-traditional countries to create an agency dedicated to SSC (Correa 2010). Since the Brazilian cooperation agency (ABC) falls under the administration of the MRE (Ayllon and Surasky 2010), Brazil's SSDC has been seen as a tool of its foreign policy (Abdenur 2007, Cabral and Weinstock 2010, Puente 2010, Dauvergne and Farias 2012), in accordance with its soft-power strategy of acquiring better visibility and legitimacy internationally (Hirst 2012). On the ABC website, SSDC is described as 'an important instrument of foreign policy, which Brazil uses to ensure a positive and growing presence in countries and regions of primary interest<sup>15</sup>'. To ensure this 'positive presence', Brazil proclaims that its SSDC has no financial aspect or commercial ties, is demand-driven and horizontal<sup>16</sup>, is not conditional on government reforms, and involves capacity-building and knowledge transfer alone (ABC 2006, IPEA 2010), thus in keeping with SSC principles<sup>17</sup>. This claim of belonging to the SSC movement is an aspect that gives Brazil the image of a promoter of Southern rights, the identity of a Southern nation and an image of altruism, all contributing to the 'beauty' and 'benignity' soft power currencies. This identity can be traced back to Lula's first mandate, where the accent was placed on recapturing the South's, and more specifically Brazil's self-confidence, or what the Brazilian government referred to as 'auto-estima'<sup>18</sup> (Silva et al. 2003, Silva 2003).



When they were asked the reasons for Brazil's engagement in SSDC, the interviewees from IPEA, ABC and Itamaraty gave the following responses: 1) the importance of maintaining good relations with the greatest number of countries; 2) cooperation as the only means of safeguarding Brazil internationally, given its geographical position away from the Western world and its language barrier with its neighbours; 3) the link with the diplomatic ambition of acquiring a permanent seat on the UN Security Council; 4) the importance of contradicting any neo-imperialist discourse against the country's activities on the international scene; and, overall, 5) to stabilise other countries' economies in order to create future markets for Brazilian goods. According to these statements, Brazil has mixed motives for engaging in SSDC from both the political and economic points of view. However, it is important to note that the safeguarding of Brazil's interests is achieved through a long-term strategy using the notion of solidarity in its development cooperation, and not using hard power resources. The first and fourth objectives reflect a soft-power strategy that aims primarily at constructing a good image internationally<sup>19</sup>. One high-ranking official from IPEA put it more bluntly: 'the Brazilian discourse held in G77 meetings and G20 is different. Brazil is acting like a child that came from a poor area and moved to a rich neighbourhood and tried to be part of a new group and then has his car vandalised by his old friends. This is why Brazil needs to give a positive image to avoid the "neo-imperialism" critics from Southern countries.' In other words, there is a need for Brazil to make sure that its development cooperation is seen by the 'recipients' of that cooperation as a model that is distinct from the Northern model and that its actions are seen as motivated by Southern solidarity, thus reinforcing the 'benignity' currency. This is explained by the fact that the Brazilian government can sense that its position as a Southern country is changing due to Brazil's recent economic development. Therefore, Brazil has to show a

stronger commitment to SSDC and the implementation of its principles to emphasise its continued belonging to the 'South'.

In the official discourses of Lauro Moreira and Marco Farani (ex-Directors of ABC under Lula), Celso Amorim (Foreign Minister, 2003-2010), Samuel Pinheiro Guimarães (Secretary General of Foreign Affairs, 2003-2009) and President Lula on dealing with SSC, development cooperation is said to be based on solidarity and to work in the partners' mutual interests, emphasizing that Brazil is not a hegemonic power and will not repeat past mistakes (Amorim 2003, Silva 2003, Silva et al. 2003, MRE 2008, Ayllon and Leite 2010). As discussed earlier, soft power is created or maintained by projecting a good image, and, when it comes to international cooperation, the stress on non-colonial aspirations is essential to reach that objective. In 2005 Lula's opening speech at the first meeting of the Community of South American Nations' heads of states stressed this rhetoric of solidarity by taking the example of Brazil's actions in Haiti, emphasising its respect for Haitian wishes and condemning any neo-imperialist presence in the devastated country: 'We reject the superiority and arrogance typical of those who have nostalgia for colonial adventures. We know that it is the Haitians' prerogative alone to decide their future'<sup>20</sup> (MRE 2008, 60). When it comes to Africa, this solidarity discourse is enhanced by a stress on partnership and understanding of the African situation, itself generating the power currency of 'beauty' in terms of the ideals of a more equal and united world. Lula displayed this narrative at his opening ceremony speech at the 13<sup>th</sup> African Union Assembly in July 2009: 'Brazil is not coming to Africa to expiate the guilt of a colonial past; neither do we see Africa as a large reserve of natural wealth to be exploited. Brazil wishes to be a partner in development projects; we wish to share lessons and experiences, to join

forces and unite our abilities. This is the only way in which we can become actors and not merely victims in transforming the present world order' (MRE 2010b, 131).

Lula talked about 'brotherhood', while Chancellor Amorim referred to 'solidarity' in explaining Brazil's cooperation activities (MRE 2010b). Both terms point to the soft power currency of 'benignity' because of the message of altruism this 'solidarity' discourse carries with it. Already at the beginning of his first mandate (2003-2007), Lula announced that solidarity would be an important aspect of his foreign policy when he said: 'We do not want to establish any hegemonic relationships. We want to establish partnerships, companionships, to be generous with those who are poorer than us, to be loyal to those who are bigger than us and, in fact, to be a partner of all countries around the world'<sup>21</sup> (Silva 2003). During Lula's second mandate (which officially ended the first of January 2011), Foreign Minister Amorim made the soft power strategy more explicit. The objective of the foreign policy of solidarity is even more clearly expressed by projecting the notion of a 'humane' Brazil as a vector of long-term benefit to Brazil and showcasing a shining example of a soft power strategy: 'We are convinced that in the long run an attitude based on a sense of humanity that favours the promotion of development of the poorest and most vulnerable will not only be good to peace and prosperity around the world. It will bring benefits to Brazil herself, in political as well as economic terms' (Amorim 2010, 225). Thus the motivation behind Brazil's involvement in SSDC is geared towards creating and/or maintaining a positive image, this image being perceived as having consequences for Brazil's political and economic capacity. Rather than using direct forms of coercion or inducement to create markets and exercise its political power, Brazil is engaging in a long-term strategy with this positive image.

This is also reflected in the definition of SSDC on the ABC website, where technical cooperation and horizontal cooperation are used interchangeably and stated as framed by the 'solidarity' foreign

policy. A report from IPEA (2010) explains that Brazil aims to cooperate in response to a partner country's requests, rather than looking for cooperation opportunities. This demand-driven approach, together with the principle of horizontality, has led to the terms 'donor' and 'recipient' being excised from Brazil's jargon of cooperation (Puente 2010), which places the emphasis instead on the way in which Brazilian cooperation actors should address the 'recipients' of Brazil's cooperation, thus making an implicit distinction from North-South Cooperation practices. This observation was also repeatedly made during the interviews conducted for this research: it is important for Brazilian development actors, as well as for southern 'recipients', that in cooperating they act towards one another and are treated like partners, strengthening Brazil's 'beauty' currency.

### **Translation of the Official Discourse in the ABC's Structure and Functioning**

The element of partnership between Brazil and the 'recipients' of its cooperation accompanies the model of cooperation the ABC is claiming to apply. The horizontality and the demand-driven approaches have been among the main demands of development cooperation for which 'recipients'<sup>22</sup> have been asking for more than a decade. If Brazil was to apply them in its projects, one result would be the improvement in Brazil's image as a cooperation partner, thus contributing to its soft empowerment. Already, as a discourse, it situates Brazil as a 'donor' that understands the claims of the 'recipient' countries.

High-ranking officials and managers of the different institutions selected for interviews described the development project cycle in detail. This process starts with requests for technical cooperation sent to ABC (through different channels, as, for example, through presidential visits, international divisions or the form available on the ABC website). ABC then calls a meeting with national experts and representatives from the partner countries to look at the feasibility of the project in terms of the budget and the time availability of the Brazilian experts. After a discussion about the

project, a cooperation agreement between Brazil and the partner country is signed as the foundation for the project document. As this process is described, the Brazilian project cycle tends to confirm that Brazilian projects follow SSC principles in the way they respect the horizontal and demand-driven approaches. As a matter of fact, these are the steps in the project cycle that Correa (2010) recommends southern countries should follow if they want to apply the horizontality discourse. He continues by saying that this approach is essential to avoid a divergence between discourse and reality which may be damaging to the 'donor' country's image if it were to claim horizontality but would in practice be in control of its own assistance.

While the solidarity discourse underlines respect for the demand-driven approach, the ABC received guidelines from the MRE in 2002 and 2004 (Puente 2010) setting out the project's priorities:

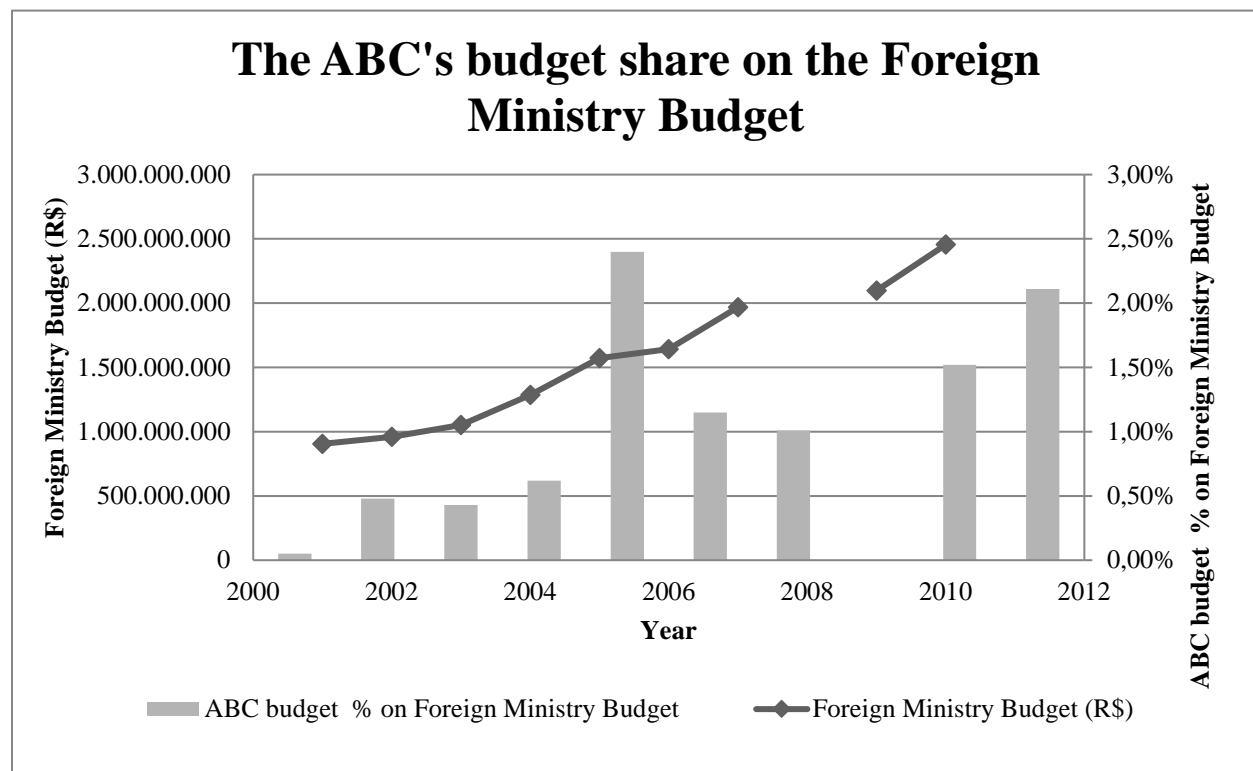
- prioritizing projects that have the additional function of expanding a positive image externally;
- choosing countries 1) with which agreements were made during presidential trips; 2) in South America; 3) Haiti; 4) in Africa, especially PALOPs;<sup>23</sup> 5) other Latin American and Caribbean countries; 6) in the CPCP<sup>24</sup>; and 7) under triangular cooperation.

In terms of soft power, the first priority exemplifies the use of SSDC to raise Brazil's profile, the primary objective being the creation of 'a positive image externally'. Thus, the Brazilian authorities select which projects will be carried out, altering the meaning of the demand-driven approach and possibly the relevance and appropriateness of the projects. However, the list of the country's priorities is so long that, even if the ABC made a selection from among the requests for technical cooperation, it would still look like no discrimination was being applied. This long list of priorities gives Brazil significant flexibility and enables the ABC to explain all its technical cooperation

projects as being conceived as solidarity with SSDC. Therefore, the guidelines do not target short-term and visible commercial interests but rather emphasise the solidarity discourse. Burges comes to the same conclusions: 'there is a clear sense within the foreign ministry and presidency that South-South cooperation is not being strategically positioned to boost individual bilateral relationships, but rather formed an important strut of Lula's international platform of a Southern solidarity approach to mutual development' (Burges 2012, 237).

While the share of ABC's budget in the MRE's budget is relatively low (0.05% in 2001 and 2.1% in 2010), it is important to note that the ABC's share steadily increased after 2003 (see trend Graph 1). There was a 400% increase in its budgetary allocation between 2004 and 2005, and ABC's budget went from R\$ 4.5 million in 2003 when Lula took office to R\$ 52 million in 2010, the MRE's budget 'only' doubling during the same period. This is a significant increase, and it showcases the growing importance of the ABC for the MRE and the priority given to SSDC.

Graph 1. Evolution of ABC budget share of the MRE's budget (2001-2010)



Source: Author. Multiple sources were used: for the years 2001-2005 (Puentes 2010, 295), for the ABC budget for the years 2006-2010 (Cabral and Weinstock 2010, 4), for the MRE's authorized budget resources (Brasil 2007-2008-2010-2011). Note that the data for 2008 are missing.

In conclusion to this section, it is clear that one of the ambitions highlighted in the political guidelines and in the interviewees' narratives was obtaining a positive image of Brazil in those countries where the projects were developed by using the 'beauty' and 'benignity' currencies. This was ensured by an increase in the ABC's budget and the use of a solidarity discourse attached to the idea of a common Southern development detached from any conditions where 'partnership' is one of the watchwords. The following section considers the influence of the political guidelines over the ABC's activities.

# **THE MANIFESTATIONS OF SOFT POWER IN BRAZILIAN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION ACTIVITIES**

## **The Steady Increase in SSDC Projects**

This section deals with the extent of the influence of Brazil's soft power strategy on its development cooperation activities. The overall figure for the Brazilian contribution to international development between 2005 and 2009 was BRL 2.9 billion, or close to USD 1.4 billion (IPEA 2010) and reached BRL 1.6 billion, or close to USD 923 million, in 2010 alone (IPEA 2013). 76% of the first figure and 66.3% of the second went to multilateral institutions; the rest was distributed in humanitarian assistance, scholarships and technical cooperation. While humanitarian assistance and scholarships also contribute to setting a positive image<sup>25</sup>, this section will only look at the external contribution to development cooperation in cases where Brazil can directly influence its actions and where cooperation is explicitly used as a tool of its foreign policy (Cabral et al. 2013), namely technical cooperation.

The total amount of technical cooperation for 2009 was close to BRL 98 million, which corresponded at the time of the study to nearly USD 57 million. This relatively low figure (compared to an overall international development budget of around USD 421 million the same year) is explained by the fact that Brazil does not transfer money in its SSDC activities. Brazilian legislation does not allow public money to be transferred to other countries' governments (World Bank and IPEA 2012), and for that reason it has only focused on capacity development and technical knowledge transfer since the 1960s (Costa Vaz and Inoue 2007). It is also evident from the World Bank and IPEA table (2012, 37) that Brazil tries to avoid direct transfers of money as much as possible, not only because of the legal restriction mentioned above, but also because it is



the transfer of knowledge that is at the core of the Brazilian solidarity discourse. One of the authors of the IPEA report added in an interview that this fact alone proves that Brazil can hardly corrupt or condition its assistance since no money is involved. He continued by saying that this shows that Brazil concentrates on its solidarity objective and has no hidden agenda. However, as already discussed, this solidarity objective forms part of the country's long-term objective of obtaining a positive image, which is an agenda in itself. One has to understand that ABC only covers flight ticket fares and per diems, the rest of the technical activity, the expertise, being borne by the Brazilian public institution that is the partner to the project. Studies show that if the costs of this expertise were integrated into the overall project costs, the latter would have to be multiplied by ten (Schläger 2007) or even fifteen (Costa Vaz and Inoue 2007). This loss of productivity (and thus of profit) for the public entity supports this solidarity discourse because of the generosity this loss illustrates in its cooperation activities (thus contributing to the 'benignity' currency). But it also represents a serious problem of sustainability for Brazilian entities, considering that they very often do not have an international mandate and that the number of requests for projects is increasing.

In terms of technical cooperation projects, it is important to note that between 2005 and 2009 the share of technical cooperation and humanitarian assistance increased six-fold, while Brazil's contribution to multilateral institutions 'only' doubled (IPEA 2010). The budget allocated to technical cooperation went from BRL 27 million in 2005 to BRL 101 million in 2010. This reflects the strategy of acquiring a positive image through SSDC and thus soft power. What is interesting is that managers and high-ranking officials from IPEA and Itamaraty made a different analysis of this increase, seeing it more as a result of soft power than as thought-through behaviour on the part of Brazil. Indeed, they explain this increase in technical cooperation as residual to the successes

of the Brazilian government in its public policies. These successes would create such a high level of attraction that the number of cooperation requests would increase accordingly. A high-ranking official at Itamaraty explained: 'Succeeding in your project brings you a good image. (...) For instance, Brazil still has a lot of inequality, so our public policies need to be adaptable to the whole of Brazil. That way we can relate to other developing countries. (...) The more our programmes were successful, the more requests we received.' This explanation was also given by the ex-director of the Energy Department at the MRE about the increase in biofuel projects because of Brazil's world leadership in that technology (Ferreira Simoes 2008). This element brings a subtle complexity to the understanding of soft power: here the increase in the number of technical cooperation projects is seen as the result of successful programmes in Brazil, an example of the soft power currency of 'brilliance'. While this element is valid, the subject here is the country's behaviour: it is one thing to be successful at something, but quite another to agree to transfer this knowledge or technical capacity without conditions attached. In this respect, soft power is expressed as behaviour in the way Brazil has decided to transfer knowledge and capacities and to increase its budget for 'solidarity' projects – an example, therefore, of the power currency of 'benignity'.

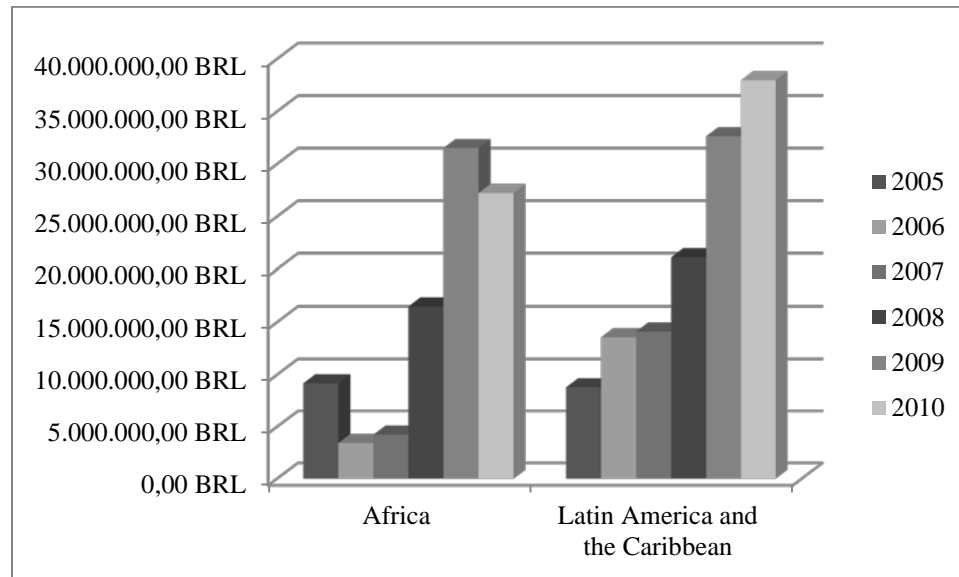
The recent IPEA report (2013) counts a budget of USD 58 million for technical cooperation in 2010, a number very close to and consistent with the figures for 2009. According to a presentation given by the current Director of the ABC, Fernando Marroni de Abreu (Marroni de Abreu 2012), in 2011 the agency spent approximately USD 26 million in technical cooperation activities and has committed itself to fund projects worth up to USD 80.5 million for the period 2012-2015. Already in 2012, Brazil was participating in 149 projects in Latin America alone (SEGIB 2014). It should be noted that Lula's mandate ended in January 2011. The new president, Dilma Rousseff,

has introduced a change in foreign policy priorities regarding development assistance and reduced the budget dedicated to SSDC projects (Leite et al. 2014).

### **The Worldwide Presence of Brazilian Technical Cooperation**

Under Lula, there was a clear tendency to increase the number of development cooperation projects. Figure 1 shows that since 2005 Africa has received a larger share every year, though it now seems to have stabilized, culminating in an equal share to Latin America's in 2009. Figure 1 also provides a clear overview of the constant increase in Brazilian contributions to SSDC between 2005 and 2010. Unfortunately, the IPEA data do not provide the distribution to countries for the years 2005 to 2009, making it difficult to analyse Brazil's priorities within the Latin America and Caribbean region (which represents 33 countries). However, the 2010 IPEA report specified the 99 countries in which Brazil implemented projects: 47 African countries, 17 in Central America and the Caribbean, 11 in South America, 11 in the Middle East, 9 in Asia and 4 in Europe. For a cooperation agency that has a limited budget at its disposal, the number of 'assisted' countries is significant and the potential influence of the 'benignity' currency multiplied. The spread of activities does give a sense that specific countries are not targeted, even though Latin America and the Caribbean and Africa have the largest share of Brazilian cooperation in financial terms, these two regions representing 83% of project costs (not surprisingly, since the two regions represent 75% of the 'assisted' countries). This is also consistent with a soft power strategy involving solidarity, that is, targeting a maximum of partners by applying the following logic: the greater the number, the better for visibility.

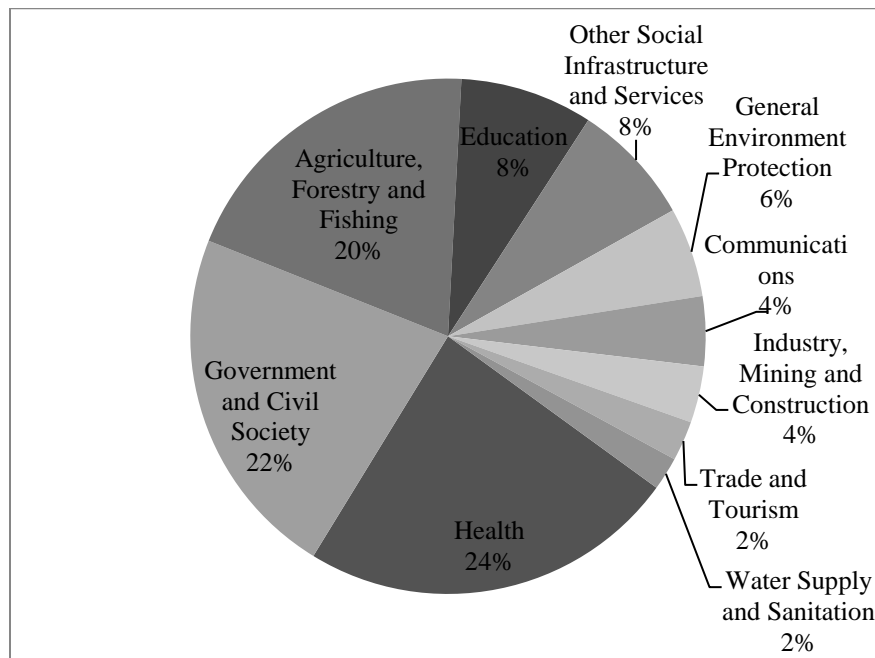
Figure 1. Evolution of Brazilian Development Cooperation in Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean between 2005 and 2010



Source: author, based on IPEA reports (2010, 2013).

Figure 2 shows the first ten sectors of technical cooperation for 2010, from cooperation in areas like communications to health programmes. Government and civil society, and the health and agricultural sectors, represent 70% of all technical cooperation projects. The spread in the activities covered can also be explained by the demand-driven approach Brazil claims to follow, making it impossible to prioritise sectors of assistance. The share given to health was explained by one of Fiocruz's international cooperation managers as the result of the implementation of the solidarity discourse: 'Fiocruz is following exactly the same principles and values of solidarity written into our constitution. (...) The international health agenda is quite full and aspires to solidarity in political discourse, but also and mainly in practice. This is what Brazil and Fiocruz are also looking for.'

Figure 2. First ten sectors by project share of Brazilian Technical Cooperation in 2010

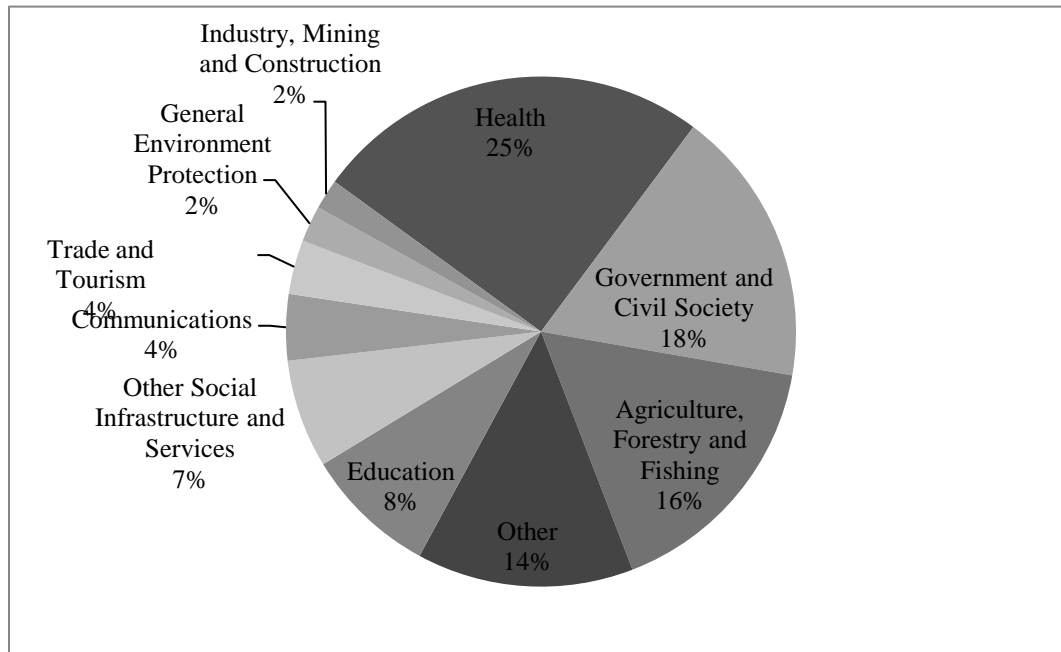


Source: author, based on AidData website database ([www.aiddata.org](http://www.aiddata.org)).

In Latin America, Brazil is the country that has contributed the most in terms of the number of projects since 2009 (SEGIB 2009-2010-2011-2012-2014), double the share of Argentina and triple the share of Mexico, these being respectively the second and third providers of cooperation in Latin America (SEGIB 2012). Brazil has also been the top cooperation actor in terms of financial contributions three years in a row (SEGIB 2009-2010-2011). Together with Mexico, it is the Latin American country with the greatest diversity of cooperation recipients and partners (SEGIB 2012-2014, Ayllon and Surasky 2010), mirroring the ABC guidelines that the maximum number of countries should be targeted and as many cooperation requests as possible answered. It also shows how Brazil stands out in its region and the relative priority it gives to SSDC compared to other South American providers, since development cooperation in Latin America mainly consists of capacity-building activities (and therefore is not linked to the 'donor's' economic capacity).

Brazilian technical cooperation in Africa covers the health, education and agriculture sectors (de Mello e Souza 2012). The CGEE interviewee pointed that: 'Unlike China and India, Brazil is not over-populated, not limited in terms of natural resources. On the other hand, Brazil needs a market'. In this respect, Brazil intends to create or maintain a good image in the longer term by covering sectors that have greater visibility and 'impact' locally, such as HIV prevention and medication or 'Bolsa Familia'-type projects. This social element promotes an image of altruism, an example of the power currency of 'benignity'. According to Amamor (2013), Brazilian SSDC establishes diplomatic ties that stress symmetric relations or soft power, which, contrary to cooperation made conditional on institutional reforms, eventually facilitates investment and business exchange. Amamor (2013) therefore reflects the long-term strategy of soft power and Brazil's ultimate motivations in SSDC: the solidarity diplomacy will ultimately have an impact on Brazil's economic interests in the beneficiary countries. These symmetric relations engage with a narrative on the similarity of climate and environment, the transferability of Brazilian technology to the African context, a common identity with the African diaspora in Brazil, and a moral debt linked to the history of slavery (Chicahava et al. 2013b). When looking specifically at African projects in Figure 3, Brazilian projects in 2010 were concentrated in the health, government and civil society, agriculture and education sectors (which combined represented 75% of all projects).

Figure 3. Sector allocation in Africa in 2010 by project share



Source: author, based on AidData website database ([www.aiddata.org](http://www.aiddata.org)).

Programmes like Fome Zero and Bolsa Familia, for which Brazil has become famous, and successes in HIV projects in Africa explain the increasing cooperation requests received by the health and education sectors and their share in Brazilian development cooperation in Africa. Therefore, these programmes are an example of 'brilliance' in the way they reflect Brazil's successes, while their implementation has contributed to the 'benignity' currency. And this was apparently ensured by an emphasis on visibility. Indeed, a SENAI manager explained that his organisation was approached by the Brazilian government to participate in the implementation of five vocational training centres in Africa. He said: 'We were enthusiastic, but the projects were, in my view, difficult to implement in the places selected: Ethiopia, Haiti, and Mozambique. In Mozambique we wanted to go to the north because Brazilian companies were based there, but the government wanted to stay in Maputo for reasons of visibility.' While this emphasis on visibility

is not specific to Brazil, it shows that Brazilian 'solidarity' projects have the additional objective of creating or maintaining a visually good image among their 'recipients'.

Though it is not a topic of discussion here, the solidarity image of the technical projects must of course be moderated when looking at Brazil's commercial loans and trade in Africa. It seems that national reconstruction projects in Africa financed by Brazilian commercial loans through the Brazilian Development Bank (BNDES) prioritise Brazilian construction and engineering companies (Masagão et al. 2012). Already Mozambique, one of the first Brazilian SSDC recipients in Africa, is increasingly a destination for Brazilian private capital (Chichava et al. 2013a). Between 2005 and 2009, debt cancellation, concessional export credits and financing food supplies amounted to more than USD 2.5 billion (Cabral 2011). If financial and commercial cooperation were included in the contributions to development cooperation, they would represent 62% of Brazil's cooperation contribution (Masagão et al. 2012).

That said, in the eyes of the Brazilian public authorities there is a clear distinction between international development cooperation and loans and credits (Cabral 2011). This is particularly emphasised in the IPEA report when the authors state in the methodology section that export credits are excluded from the calculation as well as the financial flows with a 25% grant element (the latter being nevertheless included in the OECD-ODA). Thus, the Brazilian government seems to follow two different strategies in its trade and investment activities and its development projects: one consists of reinforcing the commercial ties with other developing countries, while the other embodies the development of Brazil's soft power. This is confirmed in a report drawn up by Kaplinsky and Farooki (2009) for the UN Office of the Special Advisor on Africa. Having examined the presence of Brazilian institutions in Africa in particular, the authors conclude:



'Countries receiving the majority of aid are not the same as those receiving FDI, nor are there commonalities between major trade and FDI partners' (Kaplinsky and Farooki 2009, 42).

The fact that debt cancellations and international loans and credits are kept out of the international development calculation reflects the priority given by the Brazilian government to persist with the solidarity discourse in its technical cooperation activities. As clearly stated by Amorim (2010), SSDC is a foreign policy tool used to strengthen relations with other developing countries which will ultimately favour Brazil's economy. To avoid any neo-imperialist accusations, a clear line has been drawn between SSDC activities and financial and economic cooperation. Nonetheless, there has been a change of perspective in Brazilian SSDC in Africa. Recent studies have shown a link to exist between commercial interests and development projects, so that the demand-driven and horizontality approaches have been disregarded. Indeed, the agriculture sector in SSDC has been criticised for not pursuing a 'solidarity' agenda alone. For instance, in Mozambique it led to civil society describing one programme as a 'Trojan horse of Brazilian economic interest' because it manifested disputable demand-driven implementation (Chichava et al. 2013a, Nogueira and Ollinaho 2013). Pinho (2013) sees Brazil's rhetoric on solidarity and horizontality as a means to mask the capitalist expansion of Brazil in Africa. In fact, although this tendency to hide commercial interests within SSDC projects in Africa contradicts the solidarity discourse, it is consistent with Rousseff's policy of merging technical cooperation and trade (Rousseff 2013). For Cabral and Shankland (2013), the combination of solidarity and commercial interest reflects two different approaches to international relations within the Brazilian Workers Party (PT), where the narratives are situated between a soft power perspective involving a moral and ethical presence in Africa and a push from Brazilian companies to pursue commercially interesting projects. However, due to a lack of data after 2010, the possible change in the priorities of Brazilian SSDC could not

be investigated. Since no official report on Brazilian technical cooperation after 2010 has been released, the possible change in Brazil's foreign policy regarding the objectives behind the use of SSDC will have to be examined on a case-by-case basis through project case studies.

## **CONCLUSION**

The analysis informed by the interviews and official reports shows that Lula's government used the solidarity discourse in its SSDC with the objective of obtaining or maintaining a good image in the 'recipient' countries, thus showcasing an example of a country's behaviour as an agent of its soft power. There exist many ways for a country to strategize its influence on its soft empowerment: the USA's military cooperation (Nye 2004), Norway through its peace diplomacy (Nye 2008) or China through its cultural diplomacy (Lee 2010), for example. Brazil's soft power strategy, in targeting SSDC, adds to the list of soft power options chosen by states in their soft empowerment efforts. While it is clearly stated that the ultimate objectives are to secure Brazil's political and economic positions, the Brazilian government has chosen a long-term soft-power strategy to do so. The Brazilian government's behaviour is characterised by the implementation of SSC principles in the guidelines and organisation of the ABC, but also by the increase in the ABC's budget. This behaviour was manifested in the multiplication of technical cooperation projects that were implemented in equal proportions in Africa and in Latin America and the Caribbean by 2009, as well as in the large number of 'recipient' countries. Brazil chose to answer and support more 'solidarity' development projects (the budget for technical cooperation tripled between 2005 and 2009) with the aim of reinforcing the 'benignity' soft power currency. Brazil's soft power was also described as a result of the success of its national and international programmes (Fome Zero, Bolsa Familia, HIV programmes), resulting in an increase in cooperation requests (a 'brilliance' soft

power currency manifestation). In terms of organisation, Brazil's guidelines for development cooperation stress the horizontality of the exchanges and the non-financial aspects of its projects. These two elements are advertised as confirmation that Brazil does not and cannot tie its cooperation to specific commercial agreements and that it does not follow neo-imperialist objectives which are linked to the 'beauty' soft power currency. While this article shows that the proclaimed respect for 'recipients'' wishes and the solidarity approach of its SSDC play a part in Brazil's soft power strategy, this does not necessarily impact on the 'receiving end'. As explained earlier, this article only studies how Brazil (through ABC's SSDC) conceived its soft power strategy; it has not considered the 'effectiveness' of this strategy in the recipient countries.

When looking at the available data regarding Brazilian SSDC projects, one should take into account the limitations of the data published by the Brazilian authorities. This 'data gap' highlights the need for primary research to shed further light on the exact scope, scale and characteristics of Brazilian cooperation activities. In this article, the specification of the data remains at the overview level and does not allow an in-depth understanding of the projects' horizontality, which is central to the Brazilian government's broader foreign policy discourse. It is therefore necessary to conduct studies examining the actual implementation process of Brazilian projects and confronting this process with the 'recipients'' perspective, especially since the latest studies of Brazilian technical cooperation in Africa show a trade-oriented change in Brazilian SSDC (Chichava et al. 2013a; Nogueira and Ollinaho 2013). Cabral et al. (2013) have raised this issue and found that the solidarity narrative is paving the way to President Rousseff's trade-oriented perspective of cooperation with Africa. Even though President Rousseff cancelled the debts to Brazil of twelve African countries last year as a gesture towards the establishment of appeasement and equal relations, her declaration on changes to ABC, which will soon be integrated into another agency

that will combine technical cooperation, trade and investment, shows a change in the concept of cooperation. It seems that the long-term objective of soft power in the solidarity diplomacy has been replaced by a short-term strategy directed at guaranteeing Brazil's economic interests now. This change will certainly have an impact on the way development projects will be carried out in the future and, as a result, on Brazil's image. The distinction between commercial and cooperative activities provided Brazil with a positive image and was intended to counter neo-colonialist reproaches. However, as explained in the introduction, other Brazilian public and private actors are gaining influence in the definition of Brazilian foreign policy. Their role on the future of SSDC and therefore on Brazil's image should be investigated.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information about soft power, see Nye 1990; 2008; 2011.

<sup>2</sup> It is important to note here that Burges (2014a) dismisses this categorisation, claiming that the mistake lies in the misinterpretation of Brazil's aspirations, which fall much more into the 'major power' category.

<sup>3</sup> A long list of alliances demonstrates this ambition: IBSA, BASIC, BRICS, MERCOSUR, UNASUR, G4, and G20.

<sup>4</sup> 'Technical cooperation' is the term used by the ABC to refer to SSDC. Throughout the text, 'technical cooperation' and 'development cooperation' will be used interchangeably.

<sup>5</sup> Translated from the Portuguese by the author.

<sup>6</sup> Ten high-ranking officials or managers engaged in the international cooperation of Brazilian institutions involved in development activities, such as ABC, IPEA, the Foreign Ministry (Itamaraty), SENAI, EMBRAPA or FIOCRUZ, were interviewed in January 2013. Additionally, academics from the University of Brasilia, Rio de Janeiro State University and the Centre for Strategic Studies and Management (CGEE) and development cooperation consultants were consulted. The selection of the interviewees was based on the positions they held in the respective organisations (usually the person in charge of international cooperation) and the work they have published on Brazilian development cooperation. The number of interviews was also dependent upon the availability and positive responses of the persons contacted. For the sake of clarity, but also because the respondents informed the interviewer that they would talk more freely if they knew they would remain anonymous, the interviewees' names have not been used here.

<sup>7</sup> See IPEA (2010), IPEA (2013).

<sup>8</sup> Some authors link Brazil's peace-making operations in Haiti since 2003 and activities in administering HIV medication to its interest in gaining prestige and thus producing soft power (Gratius 2007, Kenkel 2010, Petherick 2011, Vieira and Alden 2011).

<sup>9</sup> The threefold increase of the budget allocated to Brazil's technical cooperation between 2005 and 2009 is one element reflecting this priority.

<sup>10</sup> A report by the World Bank and IPEA (2012) linked Brazilian SSDC and trade in Africa to the selection of Brazil as host of the World Cup and the Olympics, the appointment of Brazilian citizens as the new directors of the FAO and the WTO, and large African votes for Brazil's claim to a permanent seat at the UNSC.

<sup>11</sup> Goncalves Rosi (2012) exemplifies the result of this soft power strategy by referring to the fact that Brazil, along with Japan, has been elected to the UN Security Council (UNSC) more than any other member state. In another

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study, Puente (2010) shows that almost all recipients of Brazilian SSDC support Brazil's claim for a permanent seat on the UNSC.

<sup>12</sup> Academics maintain that Brazil has gained an image as a promoter of southern countries' rights (Soares de Lima and Hirst 2006, Saraiva 2007, Amorim 2010, dos Santos 2011, Ayllon 2012).

<sup>13</sup> Burges (2008) has touched on the subject of Brazil's co-optation, using a critical theory approach to foreign policy through what he calls 'consensual hegemony'.

<sup>14</sup> Gallarotti (2010) refers to soft empowerment as the result of the level of attraction produced.

<sup>15</sup> Translated from the Portuguese by the author.

<sup>16</sup> Meaning equality of partnership between two countries in the design and implementation of a project or programme.

<sup>17</sup> The guiding principles that can be found in the literature are that it is non-conditional, works on the basis of mutual benefit, is demand-driven, brings together practical know-how relating to similar socio-cultural and economic backgrounds, and operates in a horizontal manner (Bandung Conference 1955, UN-CTCDC 1978, Bobiash 1992, Chahoud 2007, Davies 2008, Rowlands 2008, UN-ECOSOC 2008, Fordelone 2009, SEGIB 2009, South Centre 2009, SU-SSC 2009, UNDP 2009, Better Aid 2010, Ladd 2010, Sanahuja 2010, SEGIB 2010, TT-SSC 2010, UNCTAD 2010, Chandy and Kharas 2011, Park 2011, SEGIB 2011, Zimmermann and Smith 2011).

<sup>18</sup> For more information about *auto-estima*, see Burges, 2005.

<sup>19</sup> The other objectives are not studied in this article, because the second pertains to geopolitical considerations, and the third and fifth are rather preferred outcomes of this foreign policy engagement.

<sup>20</sup> Translated from the Portuguese by the author.

<sup>21</sup> Translated from the Portuguese by the author.

<sup>22</sup> See discussions about the Paris Declaration, the Accra Agenda for Action or the Busan Partnership Agreement, for example, in Schulz 2008 and Mawdsley et al. 2013.

<sup>23</sup> 'Portuguese-speaking African countries' or in its Portuguese version 'Países Africanos de Língua Oficial Portuguesa'.

<sup>24</sup> 'Community of Portuguese Language Countries' or in its Portuguese version 'Comunidade dos Países de Língua Oficial Portuguesa'.

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<sup>25</sup> Brazil's peace-keeping operations are also part of its soft power strategy (Kenkel 2010). Nye (2008) defined peace diplomacy as a form of soft power that is followed by the Norwegian government, for example.

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